

# *Report*

# Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield

## ■ 1.0 Site Description

Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield was added to the NPS in April of 1960. The Battle of Wilson’s Creek, which the park takes its name from, took place in 1861 between the defending Union forces and the invading Confederate forces for control of Missouri. The Union forces did not win the battle, but were successful in keeping Missouri under Union control. The success of the Unionist at Wilson’s Creek catalyzed pro-Union forces in Kentucky, which in turn greatly diminished the South’s chances of winning the Civil War.

The 1,752-acre Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield includes most of the rolling hills where the battle was held. On the grounds of the Battlefield is the historic home of John A. Ray and his family which was built prior to the battle. The home is restored to its original appearance and is interpreted as a period farm home.

Circulation through the park is via a 4.9-mile paved tour road that also provides a self-guided auto tour. The road is one way with a 12-foot paved travel lane and a six-foot paved bicycle/pedestrian path. Along the road, there are eight interpretive stops at significant points to the battle. In addition, there are five walking trails off the tour road. A seven-mile trail system for horseback riding is very popular with local equestrian groups. The Battlefield is open year-round. Visitation is currently 250,000 people per year with the peak usage occurring in April, May, and June.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Aside from popular hiking and equestrian activities there currently is no Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) at Wilson’s Creek.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

The staff at Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield has identified the need for a small 15- to 20-passenger bus to provide circulation along the park’s loop road. The bus would run every 15 to 30 minutes during peak visitation periods, with service reduced or eliminated in the off-season. A ranger on-board the bus could provide interpretation of the historic points along the Tour Road. Visitors would be able to leave their private automobiles at

the main parking area by the Visitor Center and be transported to areas around the park including hiking trails. This type of shuttle service was identified in the park’s 1977 Final Master Plan.

## ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

A key basis for a shuttle system at Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield is safety. Sixty percent of visitor injuries over the last five years were from bicyclists on the Tour Road. Most of these accidents were caused when bicyclists were forced from the dedicated bike lane into the street by pedestrians congesting the bike lane. A shuttle bus service would reduce the number of cars on the road, and thus reduce the potential for accidents.

In addition to safety, the shuttle service would also enhance the visitor’s experience by allowing for more intense interpretation of the Battlefield. Park staff on-board would be able to explain elements of the battle as the bus moved around the park.

## ■ 5.0 Bibliography

Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield. *Wilsons Creek NB GMP Justification*. April 1999.

Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield. *Wilsons Creek Final Master Plan*. March 30, 1977.

## ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Ron Miller, Superintendent, November 15, 1999